

Quarterly Division Award

Fire Department

On the morning of November 25, 2009, Captain Brent Hobbs, Captain/Paramedic Lee Monsen, Engineer/Paramedic Chuck Cruz, Engineer Curtis Harper and Firefighter James Simmons responded as part of the Metro Task Force to rescue John Jones who had been trapped in the Nutty Putty Cave west of Utah Lake since the night before. Upon their arrival they were faced with a tragic and stressful situation. John was approximately 125 feet underground and 400 feet horizontally from the cave entrance. The only access to him was to crawl for one hour through a maze of tunnels and cervices. John had become trapped in a small crevice in a far end of the cave. The only parts of him that were visible to the rescuers were his feet and ankles.

The rescuers tried every way they could to free him, but because of the confines of the cave and the limitations on bringing any type of equipment to him, John was unable to be freed. All equipment that was used to work in the cave had to be dragged for an hour through the cave just to reach him. Also, because of the confines of the cave, only the smallest of equipment could be used. The rescuers used air chisels to chip away rock and rope systems to try and remove him, but it was all in vain and John wasn't able to survive. The rescuers efforts lasted for over 27 hours.

The decision was finally made, after John had passed away, to leave his body in the cave. This decision was made by the family and the rescuers. It was determined that because of the position of John's body, the nature of the crevice, and the danger to the rescuers of either a collapse or becoming trapped themselves, John's body would be left in the cave, and the cave would be sealed.

West Valley City's Fire Department has several members that are members of the Metro Urban Search and Rescue Task Force 2. They train and respond, without compensation, to major incidents throughout the state. They responded to Utah County as part of the Mutual Aid Agreement. All of the members involved with this rescue participated either partially or completely on their own time.

These members are to be commended for their selfless service. They are highly trained individuals who have committed themselves to risk everything to save a life. Because of their efforts in this situation, I am recommending them for the Quarterly Division Award.

Submitted by: Dean Williams
Battalion Chief, WVCFD